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With ARRA Funds, P-Reactor Disassembly Basin Project Moves One Step Closer to Final Decommissioning

Aiken, S.C. – Funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has moved the Department of Energy one step closer to closing the book on the Cold War-era P-Reactor facility at the Savannah River Site (SRS). With the installation, testing and startup of six evaporator units, SRS can begin removing about 4.6 million gallons of water from the 105-P Reactor Disassembly Basin – a phase of *in situ* decommissioning.

"The safe startup of the disassembly basin evaporators marks another milestone for this history-making Recovery Act project," said Ray Hannah, the DOE Federal Project Director of the P-Reactor Project. "Removing the water from the disassembly basin and readying it to be filled with grout are important steps in decommissioning this Cold-War relic."

Six fuel oil-fired evaporators were installed in the Disassembly Basin's Transfer Bay and started up on April 7, 2010, to remove the basin water. An additional four evaporators will be installed in the Monitor Pin Room area of the basin and should be online in mid-May. The work is being performed by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions LLC (SRNS), the management and operations contractor at SRS. The project cost more than $18.4 million and has a staff of 17 operators and radiological control staff.

"Our workforce has done an excellent job of installing the first six evaporators. We are now in the process of verifying their proper operation," said Rich Slocum, Vice President of the Recovery Act Portfolio for SRNS.

Once fully operational, the evaporators will remove 4.2 million gallons of water, a process that is expected to be completed in mid-October. The remaining 400,000 gallons will be removed after a shielding layer of grout has been installed in the bottom of the basin.

Once completed, the P-Reactor Disassembly Basin will be one of the first production reactors in the DOE complex to achieve *in situ* decommissioning, where the reactor buildings are sealed and left intact. Approximately 117,000 cubic yards of grout will fill below-grade portions of the reactor building and disassembly basin as part of the decommissioning.

The disassembly basin evaporators and the evaporation process are part of the SRS Recovery Act Project's scope to reduce the environmental cleanup footprint of SRS by more than 50 percent by September 2011.

The P Reactor and its disassembly basin began operation in 1954. The basin water cooled irradiated nuclear material targets and spent nuclear fuel while providing a radiological shield to workers at the facility. P Reactor was shut down in 1988.

Additional information on the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management and the Savannah River Site, can be found at http://www.em.doe.gov or http://www.srs.gov. For more information about the SRS Recovery Act Project, please visit www.srs.gov/recovery.

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Photo Caption:
SRS Rad workers run clean water through the evaporators in the Transfer Bay at the P Reactor Disassembly Basin as part of testing for evaporator startup.